

ECA Update: May 22, 2015



In this update:

**FY2016 Energy & Water Development Appropriations Bill
Approved by Committee**
Senate Appropriations Committee

**Nuclear Weapons Council: Enhancing Interagency
Collaboration could Help with Implementation of Expanded
Responsibilities**
Government Accountability Office

CRS Report on Nuclear Weapons Pit Production
ECA Staff

Spent nuclear waste a bipartisan issue
Fierce Energy

Yucca Mountain left out of Senate funding bill
The Hill

**Leaking reactor pool at ORNL gets attention; AREVA wins
support contract**
Frank Munger's Atomic City Underground

**Competition for Management and Operation of Sandia
National Laboratories**
FedBizOpps.Gov

**FY2016 Energy & Water Development Appropriations Bill
Approved by Committee**
Senate Appropriations Committee
May 21, 2015
[LINK](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Committee on Appropriations today approved the FY2016 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill, a \$35.4 billion measure to support U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) programs, including national nuclear security and energy research and development, as well as critical infrastructure projects administered by the Army Corps of Engineers

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Events of Interest

[DNFSB Public Hearing
and Meeting](#)
June 3

and Bureau of Reclamation.

Overall, the Senate bill represents a \$1.2 billion increase over the FY2015 enacted level and \$668 million below the President's budget request. The Senate measure, approved on a 26-4 vote, provides added resources to strengthen the U.S. nuclear deterrence posture, ensure nuclear stockpile readiness and safety, and prepare for existing and future nuclear threats.

Important to the American commerce and public safety, the committee rejects the President's budget recommendation to cut Army Corps of Engineer funding by 17 percent and instead approves a responsible level of funding to improve and maintain flood control projects and ensure the viability of national and regional ports and waterways.

The bill also promotes programs aimed at improving American energy security and economic competitiveness. For example, it contains the highest level of funding ever for the DOE Office of Science to spur greater innovation in energy research, high-performance computing and next-generation technologies.

"This appropriations bill is forward-looking in its approach to responsibly providing for our national nuclear security, waterways management, flood control, and energy security despite limited resources. All these areas are important to the day-to-day lives of Americans, and I think this bill will serve them well," said U.S. Senator Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations. "I appreciate Senator Alexander and Ranking Member Feinstein for their diligence and commitment to producing a sensible appropriations bill. I look forward to its consideration by the Senate."

"Governing is about setting priorities, and this legislation does just that by complying with the spending caps in the Budget Control Act while supporting energy, waterways and national security. The Appropriations Committee's vote puts us one step closer to doubling basic energy research, strengthening and rebuilding our waterways and ports, removing major obstacles to the use of nuclear power, maintaining our nuclear weapons stockpile and cleaning up hazardous materials left over at Cold War facilities. This legislation is also proof that we are getting the Senate working again – I thank Senator Feinstein for her cooperation on this legislation, and look forward to its consideration on the Senate floor," said U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee.

*Highlights of the Senate FY2016 Energy and Water Development
Appropriations Bill:*

The bill totals \$35.4 billion, \$1.2 billion above the FY2015 enacted level and \$668 million below the President's request. While meeting national priorities, the legislation makes targeted reductions to lower-priority programs.

Nuclear Security – \$12.3 billion, an \$856 million increase over FY2015, for DOE nuclear weapons security programs, including Weapons Activities, Naval Reactors, and Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation. This includes:

- \$8.9 billion for Weapons Activities, \$696 million above the FY2015 enacted level
- \$1.3 billion for Naval Reactors, \$66 million above the FY2015 enacted level
- \$1.7 billion for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, \$89 million above the FY2015 enacted level

Environmental Cleanup – \$6.0 billion for DOE environmental management activities, \$167 million above the FY2015 enacted level, including \$5.2 billion for Defense Environmental Cleanup to continue remediation of sites contaminated by previous nuclear weapons production. The bill also funds cleanup activities at other non-defense related nuclear sites.

Solving the Nuclear Waste Stalemate – The bill includes a pilot program for consolidated nuclear waste storage, introduced by Alexander and ranking member U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.). It also includes language that allows DOE to store nuclear waste at private facilities, such as those proposed in Texas and New Mexico.

Other policy items:

The bill prohibits any changes to the definition of “fill material” and “discharge of fill material” for the purposes of the Clean Water Act.

**Nuclear Weapons Council: Enhancing Interagency
Collaboration Could Help with Implementation of Expanded
Responsibilities**

Government Accountability Office

The Nuclear Weapons Council (Council)—which serves as the focal point of Department of Defense (DOD) and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) interagency activities to maintain the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile—carries out its statutory and regulatory responsibilities in a number of ways, but faces challenges in doing so. The Council's actions to carry out its responsibilities include documenting requirements for the size and composition of the nuclear weapons stockpile and setting stockpile priorities. The Council also provides oversight of refurbishment programs through periodic program reviews and coordinates budget matters between DOD and NNSA to support the stockpile. However, the Council faces several challenges in carrying out its responsibilities. The Council's challenges include carrying out several new budget-related responsibilities, such as certifying to Congress whether the annual budget request for NNSA meets stockpile requirements; providing oversight for two more refurbishment programs than it has previously; and adjusting program priorities in response to budget pressures, such as delays and cost growth experienced by some NNSA nuclear weapons programs.

GAO recommends that DOD and DOE update the Council's 1997 memorandum of agreement to (1) describe Council processes and its two support committees' roles, responsibilities, structure, and functions and (2) require that DOD and NNSA budget and program evaluation officials attend all support committee meetings. DOD and NNSA generally agreed with GAO's recommendations.

CRS Report on Nuclear Weapons Pit Production ECA Staff

Nuclear policy expert Jonathan Medalia has issued the third in a series of Congressional Research Service reports on nuclear weapon “pit” production. A pit is the plutonium core of a thermonuclear weapon that provides the energy to detonate the entire weapon. Though pit production has been virtually stagnant since 1989, last year Congress required the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) to produce up to 80 pits per year by 2027. Los Alamos National Laboratory’s main plutonium facility, PF-4, is where the pits are to be made. The report states that the amount of space and Material At Risk (MAR), the amount of radioactive material a worst-case accident could release, to produce up to 80 pits per year have not been vigorously calculated. The pit

production report outlines 16 options, including making procedural and structural modifications at PF-4, to move towards the goal of producing 8 pits per year. The full report can be found [here](#).

Spent nuclear waste a bipartisan issue
Fierce Energy
May 18, 2015
[LINK](#)

Both Democrats and Republicans support a federal repository for used nuclear fuel. That was just one message being delivered at the Nuclear Energy Institute's (NEI) recent Nuclear Energy Assembly.

Addressing the 2015 Nuclear Energy Assembly last week, Rep. John Shimkus, chairman of the House Environment and the Economy Subcommittee, said bipartisan support for a federal repository for used uranium fuel exists in the House and the Senate.

In his remarks, Assistant Democratic Leader Rep. James Clyburn of South Carolina touted nuclear energy's clean air attributes and said the technology is a vital component of the nation's infrastructure, identifying the management of used nuclear fuel as the top challenge confronting the industry.

"The future of this industry depends upon our ability to solve the [nuclear waste] issue," Clyburn said.

Their remarks came just a week after the House approved appropriations legislation for fiscal 2016, including \$150 million for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to continue licensing activity for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada.

Shimkus stressed the significance of the NRC's issuance of a key safety evaluation of Yucca Mountain.

"The safety evaluation on the Yucca repository shows it will be safe for one million years. How dare we take that off the table," Shimkus said.

Last month, Shimkus led a bipartisan delegation to Yucca Mountain to help inform Congress' efforts to establish a workable, long-term solution to nuclear waste management. Last week, he called a hearing to discuss the nation's nuclear waste management policy.

"The site is an invaluable national asset isolated in the Nevada desert, removed from all population centers, and co-located with the Nevada National Security Site. Since my previous visit in 2011, the landscape has notably advanced to support the development of this permanent repository," Shimkus testified.

Interest in used nuclear fuel policy has intensified in Congress in recent months driven by the new Republican control of both chambers, the court-ordered suspension of Nuclear Waste Fund fees, and the announced retirement of Nevada Sen. Harry Reid. Earlier this year, the DOE announced a plan to site and develop two storage sites for high-level radioactive waste from U.S. defense programs and commercial used fuel.

These sites are a step in the right direction, but House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton testified that moving the issue forward will require legislation.

"Some suggest an interim storage program, intended to take title to commercial spent nuclear fuel and move defense nuclear waste on an accelerated timeframe," Upton said at the hearing. "But we must ensure that spent nuclear fuel will not be stored in an 'interim' facility forever."

Greg White, member of the Michigan Public Service Commission, who provided testimony on behalf of National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), said that under the current state of the nuclear waste management program, there is nothing to show for ratepayer's money.

"Since 1982, more than \$40 billion in direct payments and interest have been paid into the U.S. Nuclear Waste Fund. And for all of those billions of dollars, so far, the ratepayers have nothing to show for it," he testified. "The efforts to shut down the Yucca Mountain Licensing project -- the nation's one and only permanent repository for high-level spent nuclear fuel authorized by law -- puts the country in the exact same status we occupied 33 years ago in 1982. Federal officials continue to 'kick the cask' down the road -- eliminating any impetus for real progress on the waste problem."

Shimkus is exploring options for the country's nuclear future, including working with all affected parties to identify the incentives and considerations necessary to move Yucca Mountain forward.

"I am committed to working with state and local stakeholders in Nevada who will engage in a constructive conversation to resolve

the current impasse," his testimony concluded. "Just saying no is not an option."

Yucca Mountain left out of Senate funding bill
The Hill
May 19, 2015
[LINK](#)

Senate appropriators have introduced a \$35 billion energy and water spending bill that would not fund a nuclear waste depository at Nevada's Yucca Mountain.

But the Republican senator behind the bill says he is not giving up on funding the project this session, floating the possibility that it could come to the floor as an amendment.

"Putting an end to our decades-long nuclear waste stalemate will involve completing Yucca Mountain," said Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), the chairman of the Appropriations Committee's energy and water panel. "I look forward to an open amendment process in the U.S. Senate and to working with the House to remove obstacles to nuclear power." Republicans, including Alexander, have long pushed for a nuclear waste depository at Yucca Mountain, but its prospects have been hindered by a handful of political barriers. President Obama opposes the project, as does much of the Nevada congressional delegation, including Republican Sen. Dean Heller and, critically, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid.

Keeping Yucca funding out an appropriations bill delays a fight over the project at least until the bill hits the floor.

Republicans have said the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is legally beholden to complete its review of the Yucca project, but NRC officials say they will only have enough money to do a portion of that work. They estimate that the full review could cost \$330 million and take several years to complete.

House lawmakers included \$50 million for the NRC's review of Yucca in their version of the 2016 energy and water funding bill.

The Senate's bill contains a pilot program from Alexander and ranking member Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) that would allow for consolidated nuclear waste storage. it also allows the Department of Energy to store nuclear waste at private facilities around the

country. Alexander called the bill a "bipartisan starting point."

Leaking reactor pool at ORNL gets attention; AREVA wins support contract

Frank Munger's Atomic City Underground
May 21, 2015

[LINK](#)

A leaking reactor pool was discovered last September at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, prompting an urgent effort to pinpoint the source of the leak of slightly radioactive water and then a watchful eye to make sure the leak — about 100 drops per minute, collected in a basin beneath the facility — didn't get worse over time.

Now the Department of Energy and its cleanup contractor, URS-CH2M Oak Ridge, are taking steps to fix the problem once and for all at the Oak Ridge Research Reactor, which was built in the 1950s and shut down in 1988.

Even though the research reactor ceased operation decades ago, the reactor pool remained filled with 125,000 gallons of water to provide shielding for some highly radioactive components stored in the pool.

The cleanup project, which is just getting started, will involve removing most of the radioactive components from the pool, draining the water, and packaging and shipping the hottest components to a disposal site operated by Waste Control Specialists in Texas.

The top of the pool will be capped with a concrete shield, which will provide enough shielding for some of the smaller — and not-so-radioactive — components left behind.

Anne Smith, a spokeswoman for UCOR, said the company has awarded a \$2.8 million subcontract to AREVA to support the cleanup efforts.

According to Smith, AREVA will be responsible for removing the irradiated components from the pool and taking care of their disposal.

"UCOR will perform the balance of the work," she said.

Overall, the project will cost an estimated \$8 million and be completed by February 2016, Smith said.

The Oak Ridge Research Reactor is located on ORNL's historic Central Campus. Years ago, during the nuclear heyday at Oak Ridge, several reactors operated in the shadow of the Graphite Reactor — the world's first continuously operated nuclear reactor and a symbol of the lab's work during the World War II Manhattan Project.

When DOE and its contractors were first evaluating the leak at the reactor pool and pondering what to do, there was a proposal to also drain the pool at the nearby Bulk Shielding Reactor and remove the radioactive components stored there.

"We did consider including that as optional work, but ultimately decided not to include it at this time," Mike Koentop, executive officer of DOE's Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management, said this week.

Ultimately, the Department of Energy plans to decommission and demolish the Oak Ridge Research Reactor and some of the smaller reactors in the vicinity, but those costly projects are not scheduled to take place until sometime in the 2030s.

Competition for Management and Operation of Sandia National Laboratories

FedBizOpps.Gov

May 20, 2015
[LINK](#)

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is seeking a contractor to manage and operate Sandia National Laboratories (SNL). SNL is presently managed and operated by Sandia Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of Lockheed Martin Corporation under contract DE-AC04-94AL85000 and is a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC). SNL's contract expires on April 30, 2016. NNSA will exercise Sandia's one-year option period, extending performance until April 30, 2017. NNSA will conduct a full and open competition for a follow-on management and operating (M&O) contract consisting of a four-month transition and a five-year base period with options for up to five additional years. Issuance of the solicitation will be announced through the Government-wide Point of Entry FedBizOpps (<https://www.fbo.gov/>) and FedConnect (<https://www.fedconnect.net/Fedconnect/>). The North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) code for this action is

561210 Facilities Support Services (size standard: \$38.5 million).
Response date June 30, 2015.

